



Left, A Belgian crew chief taxis one of the many aircraft from Belgium, Germany, Portugual, Netherlands, and Norway. They along with members of the Missouri Air National guard, 3rd Texas Air National Guard, VMAQ3 Marine Moons Dogs, Cherry Point N.C., to name a few, are practicing their skills here until April 22.



Top, F-16s from the 22nd Fighter Squadron, Spangdahlem Air Base Germany and 332nd Fighting Falcon Squadron, Norway sit ready for the next mission. Bottom, Tech. Sgt. Vernon Taylor, Missouri Air National Guard, checks a fuel gauge to get the correct fuel pressure.



Photos by Airman 1st Class James T. May III

Red Flag attracts international players

By Tech. Sgt. Charles Ramey
AWFC Public Affairs

On the ground and in the skies over Southern Nevada, an international contingent of more than 1,600 aircrew and support personnel are waging a mock war to increase the air combat capabilities of U.S. and allied forces for any future battles.

Since March 27, the U.S. Air Force and Marine Corps, along with members of the Air and Army National Guard, have been flying approximately 160 Red Flag sorties per day alongside their counterparts from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and Portugal.

The international air armada consists of more than a dozen types of aircraft.

“We currently have Air National Guard F-15s and F-16s; Air Force F-16s, B-52s, C-141s, E-3s, and KC-135s deployed,” said Col. Michael Droz, 414th Combat Training Squadron “Red Flag” commander. “A U.S. Marine air defense artillery battalion and EA-6Bs as well as Army National Guard CH-47 helicopters are also deployed as part of the U.S. air forces.”

Phase one ends today and period two runs from Monday through April 21. Col. Droz said a new contingent of U.S. aircraft and 1,600 personnel will join with currently deployed allied nation F-4s, F-16s, C-130 and C-160 aircraft and fly approximately 170 sorties per day.

“During the swap out, the U.S. contingent will be replaced by Air Force B-1s, F-15s, C-141s, C-130s, AC-130s, MC-130s, and MH-53 helicopters; more Marine EA-6s, and Air National Guard F-16s and KC-135s from four different states,” Col. Droz said. “A U.S. Marine Corps ground opposition force will also deploy during period two to provide realism to combat search and rescue training.”

“The Blue Forces’ mission is to use various tactics to attack such targets as mock airfields, vehicle convoys, tanks, parked aircraft, bunkered defensive positions, and missile sites on the Nellis Air Force Range Complex,” Col. Droz continued. “These targets are ‘defended’ by a variety of simulated ground threats as well as air threats to give participating aircrews the most realistic

composite combat training possible.”

Defending the targets is the “Red Force.” Their threats include electronically simulated surface-to-air missiles, anti-aircraft artillery, communications jamming forces, and an “enemy air force” of 414th CTS “Aggressors.”

“Our F-16 Aggressor pilots are trained to fight using the tactics and techniques of potential enemies,” said Col. Droz. “They attack and try to prevent Blue Forces from penetrating into the target area.”

Following each mission, participants debrief with members of the Red Flag staff, providing the basis for aircrew lessons learned.

“We use a computerized debriefing system along with television optical scoring and threat video to monitor aircraft, threats, and target tracking,” Col. Droz said. The information gathered, coupled with debriefs helps the pilots to refine tactics, ordnance delivery and planning considerations.”

International participants appreciate the in-depth debriefs and Red Flag training environment.

“We get good briefings here and the

equipment is wonderful” said 1st Lt. Joerg Liesegang, a C-160 co-pilot from Germany. “I’ve never seen it before and it shows us what actions are good and not so good.”

The C-160 aircrews flew five missions the first week and one as of Wednesday and are part of an airlift contingent that includes Belgian and Norwegian C-130s, U.S. C-141s, and Army National Guard CH-47 helicopters.

“This is a new situation for us. We normally don’t fly airlift support in a combat scenario and here we are flying with fighters and bombers and our allies’ airlift aircraft,” Lt. Liesegang said. “We also get to try out our self-defense equipment and see if our procedures are good.”

Working closely and communicating with the other units is important Lt. Liesegang said.

“Without fighter support we’re lame ducks and we need to be able to talk to each other and know what everyone is doing so they can protect us,” he said. “We’ve learned a lot from the other forces and I think they’ve learned from us.”



Top, an F-16 with the 332nd Fighting Falcon Squadron, from Norway, taxis. Top inset, The Norwegians squadron patch. Right, Lance Cpl. Mike Youngblood, Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C., checks the vent tube on a Marine EA-6B jet.